The Golden Tractate of Hermes Trismegistus

Aureus or the Golden Tractate of Hermes

Section I

Even thus saith Hermes: Through long years I have not ceased to experiment, neither have I have spared any labour of mind And this science and art I have obtained by the sole inspiration of the living God, who judged fit to open them to me His servant, who has given to rational creatures the power of thinking and judging aright, forsaking none, or giving to any occasion to despair. For myself, I had never discovered this matter to anyone had it not been from fear of the day of judgment, and the perdition of my soul if I concealed it. It is a debt which I am desirous to discharge to the Faithful, as the Father of the faithful did liberally bestow it upon me.

Understand ye, then, 0 Sons Of Wisdom, that the knowledge of the four elements Or the ancient philosophers was not corporally or imprudently sought after, which are through patience to be discovered, according to their causes and their occult operation. But, their operation is occult, since nothing is done except the matter be decompounded, and because it is not perfected unless the colours be thoroughly passed and accomplished. Know then, that the division that was made upon the water by the ancient philosophers separates it into four substances; one into two, and three into one; the third part of which is colour, as it were-a coagulated moisture; but the second and third waters are the Weights of the Wise.

Take of the humidity, or moisture, an ounce and a half, and or the Southern redness, which is the soul of gold, a fourth part, that is to say, half-an-ounce of the citrine Seyre, in like manner, half-an-ounce of the Auripigment, half-an-ounce, which are eight; that is three ounces. And know ye that the vine of the wise is drawn forth in three, but the wine thereof is not perfected, until at length thirty be accomplished Understand the operation, therefore. Decoction lessens the matter, but the tincture augments it; because Luna in fifteen days is diminished; and in the third she is augmented. This is the beginning and the end. Behold, I have declared that which was hidden, since the work is both with thee and about thee - that which was within is taken out and fixed, and thou canst have it either in earth or sea.

Keep, therefore, thy Argent vive, which is prepared in the innermost chamber in which it is coagulated; for that is the Mercury which is separated from the residual earth.

He, therefore, who now hears my words, let him search into them; which are to justify no evil-doer, but

to benefit the good; therefore, I have discovered all things that were before hidden concerning this knowledge, and disclosed the greatest of all secrets, even the Intellectual Science.

Know ye, therefore, Children of Wisdom, who enquire concerning the report thereof, that the vulture standing upon the mountain crieth out with a loud voice, I am the White of the Black, and the Red of the White, and the Citrine of the Red, and behold I speak the very truth.

And know that the chief principle of the art is the Crow, which is the blackness of the night and clearness of the day, and flies without wings. From the bitterness existing in the throat the tincture is taken, the red goes forth from his body, and from his back is taken a thin water.

Understand, therefore, and accept this gift of God which is hidden from the thoughtless world. In the caverns of the metals there is hidden the stone that is venerable, splendid in colour, a mind sublime, and an open sea. Behold, I have declared it unto thee; give thanks to God, who teacheth thee this knowledge, for He in return recompenses the grateful.

Put the matter into a moist fire, therefore, and cause it to boil in order that its heat may be augmented, which destroys the siccity of the incombustible nature, until the radix shall appear; then extract the redness and the light parts, till only about a third remains

Sons of Science ! For this reason are philosophers said to be envious, not that they grudged the truth to religious or just men, or to the wise; but to fools, ignorant and vicious, who are *without self-control* and benevolence, least they should be made powerful and able to perpetrate sinful things. For of such the philosophers are made accountable to God, and evil men are not admitted worthy of this wisdom.

Know that this matter I call the stone; but it is also named the feminine of magnesia or the hen, or the white spittle, or the volatile milk, the incombustible oil in order that it may be hidden from the inept and ignorant who are deficient in goodness and self-control; which I have nevertheless signified to the wise by one *only* epithet, viz., the Philosopher's Stone.

Include, therefore, and conserve in this sea, the fire and the heavenly bird, to the latest moment of his exit. But I deprecate ye all, Sons of Philosophy, on whom the great gift of this knowledge being bestowed, if any should undervalue or divulge the power thereof to the ignorant, or such as are unfit for the knowledge of this secret. Behold, I have received nothing from any to whom I have not returned that which had been given me, nor have I failed to honour him; even in this I have reposed the highest confidence.

This, O Son, is the concealed stone of many colours, which is born and brought forth in one colour; know this and conceal it. By this, the Almighty favouring, the greatest diseases are escaped, and every sorrow, distress, and evil and hurtful thing is made to depart; for it leads from darkness into light, from this desert wilderness to a secure habitation, and from poverty and straits to a free and ample fortune.

SECTION II.

MY SON, before all things I admonish thee to fear God, in whom is the strength of thy undertaking, and the bond of whatsoever thou meditatest to unloose; whatsoever thou hearest, consider it rationally. For I hold thee not to be a fool. Lay hold, therefore, of my instructions and meditate upon them, and so let thy heart be fitted also to conceive, as if thou wast thyself the author of that which I now teach. If thou appliest cold to any nature that is hot, it will not hurt it; in like manner, he who is rational shuts himself within from the threshold of ignorance; lest supinely he should be deceived.

Take the flying bird and drown it flying and divide and separate it from its pollutions, which yet hold it

in death; draw it forth, and repel it from itself, that it may live and answer thee; not by flying away into the regions above but by truly forbearing to fly. For if thou shalt deliver it out of its prison, after this thou shalt govern it according to Reason. and according to the days that I shall teach thee; then will it become a companion up to thee, and by it thou wilt become to be an honoured lord.

Extract from the racy its shadow, and from the light its obscurity, by which the clouds hang over it and keep away the light; by means of its construction, also, and fiery redness, it is burned

Take, my Son, this redness, corrupted with the water, which is as a live coal holding the fire, which if thou shalt withdraw so often until the redness is made pure, then it will associate with thee, by whom it was cherished, and in whom it rests.

Return, then, O my Son, the coal being extinct in life, upon the water for thirty days, as I shall note to thee - and henceforth thou art a crowned king, resting over the fountain and drawing from thence the Auripigment dry without moisture. And now I have made the heart of the hearers, hoping in thee, to rejoice even in their eyes, beholding thee in anticipation of that which thou possessest.

Observe, then, that the water was first in the air, then in the earth; restore thou it also to the superiors by its proper windings, and not foolishly altering it; then to the former spirit, fathered in its redness, let it be carefully conjoined.

Know, my Son, that the fatness of our earth is sulphur, the auripigment sirety, and colcothar, which are also sulphur, of which auripigments, sulphur, and such like, some are more vile than others, in which there is a diversity, of which kind also) is the fat of gluey matters, such as are hair, nails, hoofs, and sulphur itself, and of the brain, which too is auripigment; of the like kind also are the lions' and cats' claws, which is sirety; the fat of white bodies, and the fat *of* the two oriental quicksilvers, which sulphurs are hunted and retained by the bodies.

I say, moreover, that this sulphur doth tinge and fix, and is held by the conjunction of the tinctures; oils also tinge, but fly away, which in the body are contained, which is a conjunction of fugitives only with sulphurs and albumninous bodies, which hold also and detain the fugitive ens.

The disposition sought after by the philosophers, O Son, is but one in our egg; but this, in the hen's egg, is much less to be found. But lest so much of the Divine Wisdom as is in a hen's egg should not be distinguished, our composition is, as that is, from the four elements Adapted and composed. Know, therefore, that in the hen's egg is the greatest help with respect to the proximity and relationship of the matter in nature, for in it there is a spirituality and conjunction of elements, and an earth which is golden in its tincture. But the Son, enquiring or Hermes, saith, The sulphurs which are fit for our work, whether are they celestial or terrestrial ? To whom the Father answers, Certain of them are heavenly, and some are of the earth.

Then the Son saith, Father, I imagine the heart in the superiors to be heaven, and in the inferiors earth. But saith Hermes, It is not so; the masculine truly is the Heaven of the feminine, and the feminine is the earth of the masculine.

The Son then asks, Father, which of these is more worthy than the other; whether is it the heaven or the earth? Hermes replies, Both need the help one of the other; for the precepts demand a medium. But, saith the Son, if thou shalt say that a wise man governs all mankind? But ordinary men, replies Hermes, are better for them, because every nature delights in society of its own kind, and so we find it to be in the life of Wisdom where equals are conjoined. But what, rejoins the Son, is the mean betwixt them ? To whom Hermes replies, In everything In nature there are three from two: the beginning, the middle, and the end. First the needful water, then the oily tincture, and lastly, the faeces, or earth, which remains below But

the Dragon inhabits in all these, and his houses are the darkness and blackness that is in them and by them he ascends into the air, from his rising, which is their heaven. But whilst the fume remains in them, they are not immortal. Take away, therefore, the vapour from the water, and the blackness from the oily tincture, and death from the faeces; and by dissolution thou shalt possess a triumphant reward, even that in and by which the possessors live.

Know then, my Son, that the temperate unguent, which is fire, is the medium between the faeces and the water and is the Perscrutinator of the water. For the unguents are called sulphurs, because between fire and oil and this sulphur there is such a chose proximity, that even as fire burns so does the sulphur also.

All the sciences of the world, O Son are comprehended in this my hidden Wisdom; and this, and the learning of the Art, consists in these wonderful hidden elements which it doth discover and complete. It behoves him, therefore, who would be introduced to this hidden Wisdom, to free himself from the hidden usurpations of vice; and to be just, and good, and of a sound reason, ready at hand to help mankind, of a serene countenance, diligent to save, and be himself a patient guardian of the arcane secrets of philosophy.

And this know that except thou understandest how to mortify and induce generation, to vivify the Spirit, and introduce Light, until they fight with each other and grow white and freed from their defilements, rising as it were from blackness and darkness, thou knowest nothing nor canst perform anything; but if thou knowest this, thou wilt be of a great dignity so that even kings themselves shall reverence thee. These secrets, Son, it behoves thee to conceal from the vulgar and profane world.

Understand, also, that our Stone is from many things, and of various colours, and composed from four elements which we ought to divide and dissever in pieces, and segregate, in the veins, and partly mortifying the same by its proper nature, which is also in it, to preserve the water and fire dwelling therein, which is from the four elements and their waters, which contain its water; this, however, is not water in its true form, but fire, containing in a pure vessel the ascending waters, lest the espirits should fly away from the bodies; for by this means they are made tinging and fixed.

O, blessed watery form, that dissolvest the elements: Now it behoves us, with this watery soul, to possess ourselves of a sulphurous form, and to mingle the same with our Acetum. For when, by the power of the water, the composition is dissolved, it is the key of the restoration; then darkness and death fly away from them, and Wisdom proceeds onwards to the fulfillment of her Law.

SECTION III.

Know my Son, that the philosophers bind up their matter with a strong chain, that it may contend with the Fire; because the spirits in the washed bodies desire to dwell therein and to rejoice. In these habitations they verify themselves and inhabit there, and the bodies hold them, nor can they be thereafter separated any more.

The dead elements are revived, the composed bodies tinge and are altered, and by a wonderful process they are made permanent, as saith the philosopher.

O, permanent watery Form, creatrix of the royal elements; who, having with thy brethren and a just government obtained the tincture, findest rest. Our most precious stone is cast forth upon the dunghill, and that which is most worthy is made vilest of the vile. Therefore, it behoves us to mortify two Argent vives together, both to venerate and be venerated, viz., the Argent vive of Auripigment, and the oriental Argent vive of Magnesia

O, Nature, the most potent creatrix of Nature, which containest and separatest natures in a middle principle. The Stone comes with light, and with light it is generated, and then it generates and brings forth the black clouds or darkness, which is the mother of all things.

But when we marry the crowned King to our red daughter, and in a gentle fire, not hurtful, she doth conceive an excellent and supernatural son, which permanent life she doth also feed with a subtle heat, so that he lives at length in our fire.

But when thou shalt send forth thy fire upon the foliated sulphur, the boundary of hearts doth enter in above, it is washed in the same, and the purified matter thereof is extracted.

Then is he transformed, and his tincture by help of the fire remains red, as it were flesh. But our Son, the king begotten, takes his tincture from the fire, and death even, and darkness, and the waters flee away. The Dragon shuns the sunbeams which dart through the crevices, and our dead son lives; king comes forth from the fire and rejoins with his spouse, the occult treasures are laid open, and the virgin's milk is whitened. The Son, already vivified is become a warrior in the fire and of tincture super-excellent. For this Son is himself the treasury, even himself bearing the Philosophic Matter.

Approach, ye Sons of Wisdom, and rejoice; let us now rejoice together, for the reign of death is finished, and the Son doth rule. And now he is invested with the red garment, and the scarlet colour is put on.

SECTION IV.

Understand, then, O Son of Wisdom, what the Stone declares; Protect me, and I will protect thee; increase my strength that I may help thee ! My Sol and my beams are most inward and secretly in me my own Luna, also, my light, exceeding every light, and my good things are better than all other good things. I give freely, and reward the intelligent with joy and gladness, glory, riches, and delights; and them that seek after me I make to know and understand, and to possess divine things. Behold, that which the philosophers has concealed is written with seven letters; for Alpha and Yda follow two; and Sol, in like manner, follows the book; nevertheless, if thou art willing that he should have Dominion, observe the Art, and join the son to the daughter of the water, which, Jupiter and a hidden secret.

Auditor, understand, let us use our Reason; consider all with the most accurate investigation, which in the contemplative part I have demonstrated to thee, the whole matter I know to be the one only thing. But who is he that understands the true investigation and enquires rationally into this matter? It is not from man, nor from anything like him or akin to him, nor from the ox or bullock, and if any creature conjoins with one of another species, that which is brought forth is neutral from either.

Thus saith Venus: I beget light, nor is the darkness of my nature, and if my metal be not dried all bodies desire me, for I liquefy them and wipe away their rust, even I extract their substance. Nothing therefore is better or more venerable than I, my brother also being conjoined.

But the King, the ruler, to his brethren, testifying of him, saith: I am crowned, and I am adorned with a royal diadem: I am clothed with the royal garment, and I bring Joy and gladness of heart; for being chained, I caused my substance to lay hold of, and to rest within the arms and breast of my mother, and to fasten upon her substance; making that which was invisible to become visible, and the occult matter to appear. And everything which the philosophers have hidden is generated by us. Hear, then, these words, and understand them; keep them, and meditate thereon, and seek for nothing more. Man in the beginning is generated of nature, whose inward substance is fleshy, and not from anything else. Meditate on these plain things, and reject what is superfluous.

Thus saith the philosopher: Botri is made from the citrine which is extracted out of the Red Root, and from nothing else; and if it be citrine and nothing else, Wisdom was with thee: it was not gotten by the care, nor, if it be freed from redness, by thy study. Behold, I have circumscribed nothing; if thou hast understanding, there be but few things unopened. Ye Sons of Wisdom ! turn then the Breym Body with an exceeding great fire; and it will yield gratefully what you desire. And see that you make that which is volatile, so that it cannot fly, and by means of that which flies not. And that which yet rests upon the fire, as it were itself a fiery flame, and that which in the heat of a boiling fire is corrupted, is cambar.
And know ye that the Art of this permanent water is our brass, and the colourings of its tincture and blackness is then changed into the true red.
I declare that, by the help of God I have spoken nothing but the truth. That which is destroyed is renovated, and hence the corruption is made manifest in the matter to be renewed, and hence the melioration will appear, and on either side it is a signal of Art.

SECTION V.

MY SON, that which is born of the crow is the beginning of Art. Behold, how I have obscured matter treated of, by circumlocution, depriving thee of the light. Yet this dissolved, this joined, this nearest and furtherest off I have named to thee. Roast those things, therefore, and boil them in that which comes from the horse's belly for seven, fourteen, or twenty-one days. Then will the Dragon eat his own wings and destroy himself; this being done, let it be put into a fiery furnace, which lute diligently, and observe that none of the spirit may escape.
And know that the periods of the earth are in the water, which let it be as long as until thou puttest the same upon it. The matter being thus melted and burned take the brain thereof and triturate it in most sharp vinegar, till it becomes obscured. This done, it lives in the putrefaction, let the dark clouds which were in it before it was killed be converted into its own body. Let this process be repeated, as I have described, let it again die, as I before said, and then it lives.
In the life and death thereof we work with the spirits, for as it dies by the taking away of the spirit, so it lives in the return and is revived and rejoices therein. Being arrived then at this knowledge, that which thou hast been searching for is made in the Affirmation, I have even related to thee the joyful signs, even that which doth fix the body. But these things, and how they attained to the knowledge of this secret, are given by our ancestors in figures and types; behold, they are dead; I have opened the riddle, and the book of knowledge is revealed, the hidden things I have uncovered, and have brought together the scattered truths within their boundary, and have conjoined many various forms -even I have associated the spirit. Take it as the gift of God.

SECTION VI.

It behoves thee to give thanks to God who has bestowed liberally of his bounty to the wise, who delivers us from misery and poverty. I am tempted and proven with the fullness of his substance and his probable wonders, and humbly pray God that whilst we live we may come to him. Remove thence, O Sons of Science, the unguents which we extract from fats, hair, verdigrease, tragacanth, and bones, which are written in the books of our fathers. But concerning the ointments which contain the tincture coagulate the fugitive, and adorn the sulphurs it behooves us to explain their disposition more at large ! and to unveil

the Form, which is buried and hidden from other unguents; which is seen in disposition, but dwells in his own body, as fire in trees and stones, which by the most subtle art and ingenuity it behoves to extract without burning. And know that the Heaven is to be joined mediately with the Earth - but the Form is in a middle nature between tie heaven and earth, which is our water. But the water holds of all the first place which goes forth from this stone; but the second is gold; and the third is gold, only in a mean which is more noble than the water and the faeces. But in these are the smoke, the blackness and the death. It behoves us, therefore, to dry away the vapour from the water, to expel the blackness from the unguent, and death from the feces, and this by dissolution. By Which means we attain to the highest philosophy and secret of all hidden things.

SECTION VII.

Know ye then, O Sons of Science, there are seven bodies, of which gold is the first, the most perfect, the king of them, and their head, which neither the earth can corrupt nor fire devastate, nor the water change, for its complexion is equalised, and its nature regulated with respect to heat, cold, and moisture; nor is there anything in it which is superfluous, therefore the philosophers do buoy up and magnify themselves init saying that this gold, in relation of other bodies. is, as the sun amongst the stars, more splendid in Light; and as, by the power of God, every vegetable and all the fruits of the earth are perfected, so gold by the same power sustainneth all.

For as dough without a ferment cannot be fermented so when thou sublimest the body and purifiest it, separating the uncleanness from it, thou wilt then conjoin and mix them together, and put in the ferment confecting the earth and water. Then will the Ixir ferment even as dough doth ferment. Think of this, and see how the ferment in this case doth change the former natures to another thing. Observe, also, that there is no ferment otherwise than from the dough itself.

Observe, moreover, that the ferment whitens the confection and hinders it from turning, and holds the tincture lest it should fly, and rejoice the bodies, and makes them intimately to join and to enter one into another, and this is the key of the philosophers and the end of their work: and by this science, bodies are meliorated, and the operation of them, God assisting, is consummate.

But, through negligence and a false opinion of the matter, the operation may be perverted, as a mass of leaven growing corrupt, or milk turned with rennet for cheese, and musk among aromatics.

The sure colour of the golden matter for the red, and the nature thereof, is not sweetness; therefore we make of them sericum - ie Ixir; and of them we make the enamel of which we have already without and with the king's seal we have tinged the clay, and in that have set the colour of heaven, which augments the sight of them that see.

The Stone, therefore is the most precious gold without spots, evenly tempered, which neither fire nor air, nor water, nor earth is able to corrupt for it is the Universal Ferment rectifying all things in a medium composition, whose complexion is yellow and a true citrine colour.

The gold of the wise, boiled and well digested with a fiery water, makes Ixir; for the gold of the wise is more heavy than lead, which in a temperate composition is a ferment Ixir, and contrariwise, in our intemperate composition, is the confusion of the whole. For the work begins from the vegetable, next from the animal, as in a hen's egg, in which is the greatest help, and our earth is gold, of all which we make sericum, which is the ferment Ixir.

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[The Translation here used and followed is from that notable work, "A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery," (London, 1850.)]